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IRONBOUND COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS

Initial Statement of Principles

The Ironbound neighborhood has a vibrant identity and a strong sense of community values. Residents and business people have fought many battles to defend the livability of the Ironbound and are currently seeking new ways to maintain and improve the quality of life in the community. We are now beginning a community planning process that will end in a comprehensive neighborhood plan for the future of the Ironbound.

To begin this process we have defined four core values that we feel are fundamental to our community planning efforts, and, secondly, we have developed a set of principles and action steps to guide us in addressing the critical issues that confront the community.

Core Values:

1. Community: We value and will nurture the strong sense of community that exists among the diverse populations of the Ironbound.
2. Environmental Quality: We believe the community's natural resources and environment should be preserved and enhanced, hazardous waste sites should be cleaned up and no new sites introduced, and citizens should be protected from pollution of all types.
3. Families & Children: We support planning and development policies that assure the neighborhood will be a safe, healthy, attractive, and supportive place in which families can raise their children with confidence and a sense of security, and adequate recreational opportunities will exist.
4. Economic Opportunity: We believe business enterprises in the community should flourish within their established zones and economic opportunities for all should be stimulated and encouraged.

**document in process*

Planning Principles:

1. Balancing Growth and Quality of Life

For a community to be a safe and healthy place to live, the capacity of the infrastructure and public services must be in balance with the size of the population.

Currently the livability of the Ironbound is at risk. Infrastructure and services, such as roads, parking, schools, recreation areas, fire stations and other facilities are heavily overloaded. In the case of schools, classrooms sometimes have as many as 40 children and playgrounds have often been turned into parking lots. The lack of parking in the Ironbound is notorious. This situation is getting worse each day as new development occurs.

Actions Needed:

1. Encourage the city to stop granting zoning variances and site plan exceptions which result in over-development of sites where adequate outdoor space, play space for children, green planting, parking, and amenities are lacking.
2. Study (or encourage the city to prepare a study of) the adequacy of infrastructure currently in place. Assess immediate needs for improvements and make a projection of future needs.
3. Work with the city to develop ways for developers to contribute dollars or land to help defray costs of infrastructure needs.
4. Develop recommendations for changes in zoning and site plan ordinances which would help to control the density of development, such as
 - Limit height of single-family residential buildings to three stories.
 - Establish a standard of units per acre or bedrooms per acre in different zones. (No such density standard exists in current zoning.)
 - Reduce allowable lot coverage
 - Establish special zoning districts for the Ironbound.
 - Develop design standards for single-family, multi-family, and residential /commercial buildings that maintain the character of the neighborhood.

Planning Principles (Continued)

5. Press the city to enforce apartment regulations (stop creation of illegal apartments) and fully enforce city fire laws. Find out if the city has adequate resources for this.
6. Develop a package of solutions to improve the parking situation in the Ironbound to include such things as:
 - Maintain parallel, on-street parking wherever possible. Don't allow development patterns with driveways that eat up on-street parking spaces.
 - Limit front-yard setbacks to avoid parking in front yards.
 - Rescind the recently passed ordinance amendment which gives full credit for off-street parking spaces whether they have direct access to the street or not. (Title 16, Chapter 9, Site Plan Review Section 37)
 - Make arrangements for residents to use private and public parking lots that are vacant at night.
 - Initiate a system of residential parking permits for permanent residents.
 - Encourage the expansion of public transit.
7. Formal analysis of population in Ironbound, population trends, comparative to other neighborhoods.

2. Traffic Control, Public Transit, and Encouragement of Pedestrians

By creating a safer and pleasanter environment for pedestrians and users of public transit within the Ironbound, it will be possible to reduce the use of the automobile, clean the air, and make the many assets of the Ironbound more accessible to people.

Actions Needed:

1. Assess public transit services to the Ironbound area and within it, including routes, timetables, etc. to see if there are ways to improve the services and make them more useful to people.
2. Develop ways, including land use regulations, to route heavy truck traffic away from residential areas.

Planning Principles (Continued)

3. Develop a list of the key features of pedestrian-centered design to serve as the basis of planning, such as:
 - Wide sidewalks
 - On-street parking
 - Mixed-use neighborhoods which include residences, shops, schools, workplaces, and parks—all together within walking distance of each other.
 - Avoidance of large, single-use, single market developments which create the need for cars and cancel out pedestrian use.
4. Assure that all major street intersections have traffic lights with pedestrian signals, especially near schools.
5. Install pedestrian signal controls at major crossings, i.e. Fillmore & Ferry St., investigate whether no right on reds should be installed anywhere else.
6. Work with the city to revise zoning and site plan review ordinances so that plans will not be allowed that have cars dangerously backing into streets over sidewalks.

3. Recreation and Open Space

It is critical to the health, safety, and welfare of the people of the Ironbound to have pleasant places to interact with others and to engage in recreation. It is particularly important to have healthy public play space for children and their families.

Actions Needed:

1. Prepare an inventory of existing parks and open spaces. (Find out if Abeles firm has done this for the Master Plan)
2. Develop a park and recreation plan for the community which includes restoring older parks, play areas, and recreational facilities as well as building new ones.

Planning Principles (continued)

3. Assure that children and adults have access to adequate, accessible, well-kept park areas and recreational facilities by requiring that different types and levels of recreational activities be located throughout the Ironbound. Use national standards as a guide to the amount of recreational land of different types that is appropriate per capita.
4. Develop a plan for restoring, maintaining and monitoring playgrounds around schools.
5. Form a Recreation Oversight Committee, and non-profit groups, such as Friends of Riverbank Park, to supervise park use and maintenance.
6. Require developers to help the city meet the established standards either by dedicating land or dollars for recreation or making recreational facilities part of their developments.
7. In single and multi-family developments assure adequate backyards or areas for children to play in safety.
8. Include provisions for needed recreational sites, facilities, and improvements in new City Master and Capital Budget..

4. Education and Schools

Children in the Ironbound should have access to high quality education from pre-school through high school; they should have the opportunity to attend school within the immediate neighborhood in which they live at least up to the eighth grade; and school classroom sizes should not exceed 22 children.

Actions Needed:

1. Create a committee to work with the School Board's Capital Planning and Facilities Management Committees to plan for needed school improvements, site acquisition and new construction based on population demands.

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Planning Principles Continued

5. The Environment

The health of the residents of the Ironbound is being seriously threatened by multiple sources of pollution: contaminated former industrial sites, currently toxic industries, and air pollution from a number of sources. It is imperative that former industrial sites be cleaned up and that functioning industrial areas are in compliance with environmental regulations. Further, it is desirable for both health and safety reasons to separate residential uses from industrial uses whenever possible, and to be consistent in the regulations which govern this area. Residents must be protected from toxic substances in the ground, water and air. Current regulations, which prohibit siting industry next to residential uses, allow siting of housing next to industry!

Large areas of the community, particularly in new developments, are covered or are being covered over with concrete. Streets, lots, parking areas, buildings, housing units should be designed and arranged to reduce unnecessary impervious cover and to maximize the planting of trees and the creation of green spaces. The amenity, livability, and environmental quality of a community is greatly enhanced by green areas and trees which contribute strongly to both the healthfulness and the appearance of the community. Conversely, the community is greatly diminished by the lack of them.

Actions Needed:

1. Every new development site should be subject to at least a Phase I environmental study and rigorous soils testing by qualified environmental professionals at the time of application. (Now this is not automatically done, but only at the request of the city engineer.)
2. The city's Site Plan Review Ordinance should be written so that detailed landscaping plans by qualified landscaping professionals are required and standards for landscaping are clearly established.
3. City, State, and Federal environmental laws and regulations regarding soils testing, dumping, and environmental assessments of sites must be rigorously applied. Research should be done to see how the city is currently coordinating this work and if there is adequate staffing to do the job.

Planning Principles (continued)

4. Obtain copies of federal EPA's "Known Contaminated Sites" list as well as the city's list. Work with city engineers to set priorities for clean up.
5. Research city's Brownfields Program and make sure applications are in process for the most worrisome Ironbound sites.
6. Research recent studies on the possible toxic effects of interior garages on residents. As these have been allowed so widely, research should be done to determine the kinds of materials and treatments needed to insure that carbon monoxide does not infiltrate the house when there is an interior garage.
7. Build into city's zoning ordinance districts that create separate zones when possible for residential and heavy industrial uses, and be consistent in what is allowed. Current zoning is not consistent. It prohibits construction of new chemical plants or industry near residential, but does not prohibit building new housing next to chemical or industry
8. If industrial and residential uses are adjacent, make sure site plan review and land subdivision ordinances require adequate buffering between residential and industrial uses. Develop standards for substantial separation and buffering between these uses.
9. Explore with the city a system of tax breaks to encourage the restoration and preservation of existing and historic structures for new uses when possible.
10. Develop fire regulations that adequately protect the community's safety.